

PREVIEW | Tonight will test Wildcats' mental toughness, willpower, adversity

CONTINUED FROM TIPOFF 1

On the other side, K-State has been up and down as a team this season. Sophomore guard Marcus Foster and senior forward Nino Williams continue to lead the team with 13.4 and 11.4 points per game, respectively, but turnovers and careless defense have set the Wildcats up for failure too many times this season.

The Wildcats can hang their hat on the "Octagon of Doom," though. K-State has lost just four times at home this season, and the margin of victory between K-State and Kansas in Bramlage in the last three seasons has been 4.3 points a game. Last season it was three points, and K-State was the team that came out on top.

Tonight will be a test for K-State. A test of mental

toughness, willpower, adversity and all the words and phrases that led off this preview. If the K-State team that knocked off No. 17 Oklahoma shows up to play, fans may be in for a treat and a possible court storming. If the team that lost by double-figures to TCU and Baylor steps on the court, it may not be pretty.

K-State and No. 8 Kansas tipoff from Bramlage Coliseum tonight at 8 p.m.

Q&A | Dodd says K-State needs Foster to get hot, Bramlage to get wild tonight

CONTINUED FROM TIPOFF 3

Collegian: K-State seemed content, as most teams have in years past, double teaming Kansas' post players consistently gashing it for easy layups. Has this worked at all for teams this year, and do you expect K-State to defend the same way this time around?

Dodd: Not many teams have doubled Kansas in the post this year, just because this is one of Kansas' worst low-post scoring teams of the Bill Self era. Ellis scores a lot, but he does a lot from the high-post, and Jamari

Traylor, Cliff Alexander and Landen Lucas have struggled to score with their back to the basket. I don't know how K-State will defend Kansas, but I imagine they'll start by trying to limit Ellis' touches and containing Kansas point guard Frank Mason.

Collegian: What's your favorite moment from the Sunflower Showdown over the years? Favorite matchup to watch?

Dodd: I covered the 2008 game at Bramlage Coliseum — the night K-State ended "The Streak" — as a student journalist. I'm not sure I've ever witnessed a game in a more emotionally-charged environment. It

was wild. Kansas would go on to win the NCAA title that year, but even that Kansas team couldn't deal with Bramlage that night. It was something else. Also, Michael Beasley was really good.

Collegian: What must Kansas do to earn a win? What about K-State?

Dodd: If Kansas makes shots and plays with solid energy on defense, they should probably win. If Marcus Foster gets hot and Bramlage starts going wild, it'll probably be close.

Collegian: One matchup fans should keep their eyes on?

Dodd: Wayne Selden vs. Marcus Foster.

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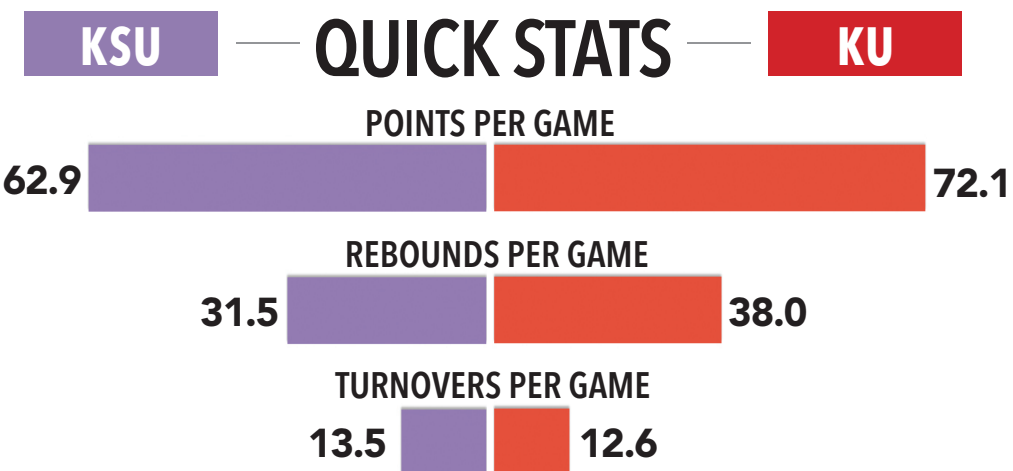
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K-STATE VS. NO. 8 KANSAS

8 P.M. • MONDAY, FEB. 23
BRAMLAGE COLISEUM • ESPN



IMPACT PLAYERS

#42

Thomas Gipson

19 points
7 rebounds
(vs. Kansas Jan. 31)

#34

Perry Ellis

16 points
12 rebounds
(vs. Kansas Jan. 31)

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K-State returns to Bramlage for 281st Sunflower Showdown

By TATE STEINLAGE
THE COLLEGIAN

Thomas Gipson was visibly upset Saturday after K-State was trounced by Baylor in Waco, Texas. Though typically a quiet, low-volume-type player, Gipson criticized K-State with no restraint.

That criticism included himself.

He admitted that the team is currently lacking mental toughness, adding "that's not how K-State basketball does it." Lying, he said, was frustrating enough, but being embarrassed by 27 points was something new and ugly.

Basically, Gipson summed up what many already have found out: this K-State men's basketball team is currently fragile. Apathetic. Lackadaisical. Going through the motions. Complacent. Lost. Struggling. Searching for answers.

Whatever it is, Kansas, the team 75 miles down the road, is perfectly OK with it.

The two in-state rivals meet tonight at Bramlage Coliseum in 281st edition of the Sunflower Showdown. The No. 8-ranked Jayhawks (22-5, 11-3) have two weeks to capture an 11th-straight Big 12 title. K-State (13-15, 6-9) has two weeks to climb above .500.

Two programs heading in opposite directions. However, K-State head coach Bruce Weber said he remembers the scene a year ago in Manhattan when roughly 5,000 students swarmed the Bramlage court under a scoreboard that read: K-State 85, Kansas 82. He recalls his team perched atop the scorers table celebrating an upset, Sunflower Showdown victory.

That's what he and his K-State team are clinging to heading into the Big Monday matchup.

"The way we play at home, I don't think there is any doubt we can play at a high level," Weber said to reporters Saturday. "Now, can we play good enough to beat them? We are going to have to



PARKER ROBB | THE COLLEGIAN

Senior forward **Thomas Gipson** tries to shoot a left-handed jumper over Kansas forward **Jamar Traylor** (left) and guard **Devonte Graham** (right) in the first half of the Wildcats' 57-68 loss to the No. 9-ranked Jayhawks in the first installment of the Sunflower Showdown on Jan. 31 in Lawrence's Allen Fieldhouse.

guard. We can't do what we did at the start of the first Kansas game and what we did tonight, allowing layups. Hopefully we can get our mindset right and use the crowd and get after them a little bit."

Kansas is the clear favorite and for good reason. The Jayhawks lead the series 188-92. Kansas head coach Bill Self is 20-4 against K-State. And in Manhattan all-time, the Jayhawks carry a 619 winning percentage.

Records aside, but statistically speaking, Kansas is still the better team. The Jayhawks are averaging nearly 72 points per game while holding opponents to 64 points a contest. Five Kansas

players average more than seven points a game, led by junior forward Perry Ellis, a strong candidate for Big 12 Player of the Year, at 13.3 points per game.

This isn't the strongest side Self has fielded in his 12 seasons at Kansas. The Jayhawks lack a true post presence and a go-to scorer. But this is a Self-coached Kansas team that, well, plays like a team. Kansas is ranked 27th in the country rebounding the ball, grabbing nearly 40 boards a game. The Jayhawks distribute the ball well and finish when it matters most.

CONTINUED ON TIPOFF 4, "PREVIEW"

